

Message Text

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FOR HCARTER FROM S/PRS

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TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE, DECEMBER 15

NO. 27

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF MIDDLE EAST PORTION OF PRESIDENT'S
PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 15:

Q. MR. PRESIDENT, THERE ARE REPORTS THAT PM BEGIN IS BRING-
ING ALONG SOME OF HIS PEACE PROPOSALS TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.
MY QUESTION IS, IF THE UNITED STATES UNDERWRITES PEACE, WILL
WE HAVE A SAY IN TERMS OF WHAT REAL PEACE IS; IF IT GIVES
ECONOMIC AID, PSYCHOLOGICAL AID, SECURITY, AND SO FORTH?
AND I HAVE A FOLLOW-UP.

A. WELL, OUR HOPE AND OUR GOAL HAS BEEN THAT THE NATIONS
DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE MIDDLE EASTERN CRISIS, THE MIDDLE
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EASTERN DISPUTES, WOULD MEET DIRECTLY WITH ONE ANOTHER
AND REACH AGREEMENTS THAT WOULD ENCOMPASS THREE BASIC
QUESTIONS. ONE IS THE DEFINITION OF REAL PEACE, GENUINE
PEACE, PREDICTABLE PEACE, RELATIONSHIP AMONG HUMAN BEINGS
THAT MIGHT TRANSCEND THE INCUMBENCY OF ANY PARTICULAR LEAD-
ER. I THINK PRESIDENT SADAT HAS MADE A MAJOR STRIDE ALREADY
IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF WHAT IS REAL PEACE.

THE SECOND ONE IS THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ISRAELIS FROM
TERRITORY AND, AT THE SAME TIME, THE ASSURANCE THAT THEY

WOULD HAVE SECURE BORDERS.

AND THE THRID ONE, OF COURSE, IS TO RESOLVE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, THE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL IS A MAJOR STEP FORWARD.

WE ARE ATTENDING THE CAIRO CONFERENCE AND WILL OFFER OUR GOOD SERVICES WHEN IT IS NEEDED. BUT THE BASIC RESPONSIBILITY WILL BE ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE TWO NATIONS DIRECTLY INVOLVED.

AS YOU KNOW, UNITED NATIONS OBSERVERS ARE ALSO THERE. OTHER COUNTRIES WERE INVITED BY PRESIDENT SADAT TO ATTEND--LEBANON, SYRIA, JORDAN AND THE SOVIET UNION. THEY HAVE NOT YET ACCEPTED THAT INVITATION. WE ARE NOT TRYING TO DEFINE THE TERMS OF PEACE. ANYTHING THAT IS ACCEPTABLE TO ISRAEL AND HER NEIGHBORS WILL CERTAINLY BE ACCEPTABLE TO US.

BUT WE ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE, I HOPE, AS A TRUSTED INTERMEDIARY ON OCCASION TO BREAK A DEADLOCK OR ADD A SUPPORTIVE WORD OR IN A WAY TO INTRODUCE ONE OF THOSE LEADERS TO ANOTHER AND CONVINCE THE OPPOSITE PARTY THAT EACH LEADER IS UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTING IN GOOD FAITH.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT PROPOSALS, IF ANY, PM BEGIN WILL BRING TO ME TOMORROW MORNING. BUT HE AND I WILL MEET PRIVATELY JUST THE TWO OF US FOR A WHILE AT HIS REQUEST AND I WILL LISTEN TO WHAT HIS REPORT MIGHT BE AND WE WILL BE CONSTRUCTIVE AS WE HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OF WHAT THE OUTCOME OF THE CAIRO CONFERENCE WILL BE IN TERMS OF GOALS?

A. I HAVE HOPES, BUT OBVIOUSLY I CAN'T PREDICT WHAT WILL OCCUR. WE HAVE ALWAYS HOPED THAT EVEN WHEN SOME OF THE NATIONS CHOOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE, THAT THE NATIONS WHO DO NEGOTIATE COULD MOVE A MAJOR STEP FORWARD TOWARD AN ULTIMATE COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT.

BOTH PM BEGIN AND PRESIDENT SADAT HAVE STATED PUBLICLY AND REPEATEDLY THAT THEY ARE NOT SEEKING STRICTLY A BILATERAL OR TWO-NATION AGREEMENT. THEY RECOGNIZE THAT AN AGREEMENT IN THE SINAI WITHOUT INVOLVING THE WEST BANK, THE GAZA STRIP, GOLAN HEIGHTS, COULD NOT BE A PERMANENT RESOLUTION OF TERRITORIAL DIFFERENCES, AND IF THEY IGNORE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION THIS WOULD STILL NOT RESULT IN PERMAN-

ENT PEACE, AND IF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION IS NOT ADDRESSED, AGAIN, IT WOULD NOT BE AN ADEQUATE STEP TOWARD PERMANENT

PEACE.

SO I THINK, OBVIOUSLY, THIS IS A GOOD FIRST STEP. I WOULD HOPE THAT IN CAIRO ITSELF, EVEN IF THE OTHER NATIONS DON'T CHOOSE TO ATTEND, THAT EGYPT AND ISRAEL CAN MAKE A MAJOR STRIDE TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE THAT WOULD AT LEAST ADDRESS IN DEFINITIVE TERMS THE QUESTIONS THAT ALSO INVOLVE PALESTINIANS, JORDANIANS, SYRIANS AND LEBANESE.

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(QUESTIONS ON ANOTHER SUBJECT INTERRUPT)

Q. I TAKE IT FROM YOUR DESCRIPTION OF THE U.S. ROLE IN THE MIDEAST THAT IT IS NOT YOUR INTENTION TO ENDORSE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS; THAT IS TO SAY, IF MR. BEGIN OR ANYONE ELSE PRESENTS TO YOU WHAT THEY HOPE TO DO, THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO A PEACE CONFERENCE AND SAY, "JIMMY CARTER SAYS THAT THIS IS WHAT HE LIKES."

A. WELL, THAT IS A FAIRLY GOOD ASSESSMENT. I STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH MOST OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN LEADERS, CERTAINLY PRESIDENT SADAT. WE EXCHANGE COMMUNICATIONS SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK. CY VANCE IS RETURNING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST TONIGHT AND HE WILL GIVE ME A VERY DEFINITIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDE OF ALL THE MIDDLE EASTERN LEADERS INVOLVED, PLUS SAUDI ARABIA, ONE STEP REMOVED GEOGRAPHICALLY.

I THINK I KNOW AT LEAST IN GENERAL TERMS WHAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO PRESIDENT SADAT, MAYBE NOT AS A FINAL CONCLUSIVE AGREEMENT, BUT AS AN INTERIM STEP, OR MAJOR STEP, TOWARD A FINAL AGREEMENT. AND IF PM BEGIN'S PROPOSAL, IN MY OWN PERSONAL JUDGMENT, IS CONDUCIVE TO A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO PRESIDENT SADAT, THEN I WOULD CERTAINLY PRIVATELY TELL HIM, "THIS IS A VERY GOOD STEP." IF IT SHOULD BE FAR SHORT OF WHAT I THINK PRESIDENT SADAT COULD ACCEPT WITHOUT VERY SERIOUS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES AND SERIOUS DISAPPOINTMENT IN EGYPT, AND THE REST OF THE WORLD, I WOULD HAVE NO RETICENCE ABOUT TELLING PM BEGIN PRIVATELY, "I JUST DON'T THINK THIS GOES FAR ENOUGH." BUT I WOULD NOT BE THE ULTIMATE JUDGE OF WHETHER IT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE EGYPTIANS OR NOT. THAT WOULD BE UP TO PRESIDENT SADAT.

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(QUESTIONS ON ANOTHER SUBJECT INTERRUPT)

Q. MR. PRESIDENT, MAY I ASK YOU ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE SOVIET UNION IN THE MIDDLE EAST? DO YOU FEEL THAT THE

SOVIET UNION IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN IN ANY WAY HELPFUL IN TRYING TO BRING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND HOW DO YOU REGARD U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, AS WE COME TO THE END OF THIS YEAR?

A. I THINK OUR RELATIONS WITH THEM ARE MUCH BETTER THAN THEY WERE SHORTLY AFTER I BECAME PRESIDENT. I THINK THEY HAVE GOTTEN TO KNOW ME AND MY ATTITUDES; I THINK I HAVE GOTTEN TO KNOW THEM AND THEIR ATTITUDES MUCH BETTER THAN BEFORE, ON SALT, A COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN, THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND MANY OTHER ITEMS. WE HAVE HAD A VERY CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION WHICH I THINK IS CONSTANTLY IMPROVING. I THINK THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE CONSTRUCTIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAN THEY FORMERLY HAD.

OBTAINING, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN AS CONSTRUCTIVE AS I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SEEN.

THE SOVIETS, FOR INSTANCE WERE INVITED TO ATTEND THE CAIRO CONFERENCE, ALONG WITH OTHER NATIONS. THEY WERE INVITED BY PRESIDENT SADAT. THEY CHOSE TO DECLINE THE INVITATION. I WISHED THAT THEY HAD ACCEPTED. THE SYRIANS HAVE CHOSEN TO DECLINE. I HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE HAD TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE SYRIANS TO PREVENT THEIR ATTENDANCE. I THINK THIS WAS A DECISION MADE BY PRESIDENT ASSAD IN SYRIA.

SO I WOULD SAY THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT BEEN VERY CONSTRUCTIVE YET. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN NEARLY AS MUCH OF AN OBSTACLE AS UNCLASSIFIED

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THEY APPARENTLY WERE IN THE PAST.

OUR GENERAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SOVIETS ARE VERY GOOD AND MY HOPE IS THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE IN THE FUTURE WHEN WE GO PAST CAIRO TOWARD AN ULTIMATE GENEVA CONFERENCE. I WAS WELL-PLEASED WITH THE JOINT SOVIET AND AMERICAN STATEMENT. ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT A DEFINITIVE SOLUTION, OBVIOUSLY, IT HAS NO OBSTACLES IN IT WHICH WOULD PREVENT AN ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST DIFFERENCES.

SO I WOULD SAY IT IS A MIXED ASSESSMENT. IN GENERAL, THOUGH, THEY COULD HAVE BEEN MUCH WORSE.

Q. MR. PRESIDENT, YOUR PREFERENCE FOR A GENERAL OR COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE, ONE THAT COULD BE ENDORSED BY ALL THE INTERESTED PARTIES. BUT I WONDER IF YOU THINK, IN LIGHT OF WHAT HAS

HAPPENED SINCE PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT, SINCE MANY PEOPLE FEEL THAT ISRAEL HAS NO REAL WORRIES ABOUT A ONE-TIME WAR, THAT IF AN AGREEMENT, FORMAL OR INFORMAL, EVEN A REAL WARMING TAKES PLACE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT, THAT YOU COULD HAVE DE FACTO PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, PERHAPS NOT AS NEAT AND WRAPPED UP AS A TREATY, THAT WOULD BE A MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT IN ITSELF? AND DO YOU THINK THAT IT MAY HAVE TO COME TO THAT AS A RESULT OF PRESIDENT ASSAD'S OPPOSITION TO THE TALKS, AND THE PLO?

A. WELL, OUR IMMEDIATE HOPE AND GOAL IS THAT ANY PEACE MOVE MADE BY ISRAEL AND EGYPT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE MODERATE ARAB LEADERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, CERTAINLY KING HUSSEIN IN JORDAN, CERTAINLY THE SAUDI ARABIANS. WE HAVE UNCLASSIFIED

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HAD GOOD INDICATIONS IN MY PERSONAL VISITS WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD THAT HE WANTS TO RESOLVE THE DIFFERENCES. LEBANON IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED, AS YOU KNOW, BY SYRIAN PRESENCE THERE. THE PLO HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY NEGATIVE. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN COOPERATIVE AT ALL.

IN SPITE OF MY OWN INDIRECT INVITATION TO THEM AND THE DIRECT INVITATIONS BY SADAT AND BY ASSAD, BY KING HUSSEIN, BY KING KHALID IN SAUDI ARABIA, THE PLO HAVE REFUSED TO MAKE ANY MOVE TOWARD A PEACEFUL ATTITUDE. THEY HAVE COMPLETELY REJECTED UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338. THEY HAVE REFUSED TO MAKE A PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT ISRAEL HAS A RIGHT TO EXIST, TO EXIST IN PEACE. SO I THINK THEY HAVE, THEMSELVES, REMOVED THE PLO FROM ANY IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF PARTICIPATION IN A PEACE DISCUSSION.

BUT I CERTAINLY WOULD NOT ASCRIBE THAT SORT OF INTRANSIG-ENCE OR NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD ANY OF THE OTHER PARTIES WHO HAVE BEEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE PARTICIPANTS. WE WANT TO BE SURE THAT AT LEAST MODERATE PALESTINIANS ARE INCLUDED IN THE DISCUSSIONS. AND THIS IS AN ATTITUDE THAT IS MIRRORED NOT ONLY BY MYSELF BUT ALSO BY PM BEGIN, PRESIDENT SADAT AND OTHERS. SO I THINK THEY ARE ALL MAJOR STEPS, ALREADY HAVING BEEN TAKEN, TO DELINEATE THOSE WHO ARE IMMEDIATELY EAGER TO CONCLUDE A STEP TOWARD PEACE, THOSE LIKE PRESIDENT ASSAD WHO WILL WAIT A WHILE TO SEE WHAT DOES OCCUR, SEE IF THE GOLAN HEIGHTS QUESTION CAN BE RESOLVED AND SO FORTH, AND THOSE WHO HAVE IN EFFECT REMOVED THEMSELVES FROM SERIOUS CONSIDERATION LIKE THE PLO.

CHRISTOPHER

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